
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address: **1126 5th Street, NW**
Landmark/District: **Mount Vernon Square**

Meeting Date: **September 27, 2012**
H.P.A. Number: **#12-569**
Staff Reviewer: **Brendan Meyer**

☐ Agenda
☒ Consent Calendar
☐ Denial Calendar
☒ Permit Review
☒ Alteration
☐ New Construction
☐ Demolition
☐ Subdivision

The applicant, Michael Beidler of Trout Design Studio, for owners K2 Investments, seeks permit approval for small rear additions and front alterations for a new basement entrance to a three story contributing rowhouse in the Mount Vernon Square Historic district. Plans were prepared by Trout Design Studio.

Property Description and Context

1126 5th Street, NW was built for noted real estate developer T.F. Schneider in 1890. It was part of a project that built 53 rowhouses and fully developed all of Square 482 in one project. For that period, a project of this size was unusual. The rowhouses share a common language of materials and forms, but alternating arrangements of different projecting bays, gables, dormers and roof forms add variety to the streetscape. The most prominent variation is found in the projections at the mansard roofline. Three-story hexagonal projections with slate turret roofs alternate with two-story square projections capped by setback gables or covered porches.

Prior to designation of the historic district in 1999, several of the original 53 properties fell into severe disrepair. Several rowhouse were demolished, one on 5th Street and three on 6th Street. All but one have been rebuilt with compatible new construction in the last five years. The original rowhouse massings are three story main blocks with two story rear wings. The new rowhouses are generally three stories throughout with setback fourth floors, and many of the historic rowhouses have additional heights added to their rear as well. Another very common alteration is new basement entrances along the row whereas original construction alternated rowhouses with and without basement entrances. Today a significant majority of rowhouses on the block have basement entries. Unfortunately many examples predate the creation of the historic district and the adoption by the Board of *Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows* (2011).

Proposal

On the rear, a parking pad semi-enclosed by CMU and a partial roof will be demolished and replaced with a one story brick addition roughly flush with the neighbor to the south. The rear façade of the addition will include a single window well running nearly the whole width of the façade. On top of the original two-story rear wing a double height addition will be added to house a small extension of the third floor and stairs to provide access to a roof deck above the third floor. New decks on top of the first, second and third

floors will populate these small flat surfaces and be set-back from any visibility that might occur from 5th Street. The double-height stair will be clad and roofed with ribbed metal, and the roof shape is a curved half-arch.

The front cast iron steep and basement will be altered to accommodate a new basement entrance under the existing front door. To do this the cast iron stairs will be removed and restored off site. A new basement stair will be excavated alongside the projecting bay and include a turned run of stairs that will meet grade four feet beyond the current front steps. The restored cast iron stairs will be installed on a raised tread such that the metal landing will be flush with the existing front door. Other minor restorative work will be done to the front façade including replacing windows in-kind, replacing the non-original door with a new door which replicates the historic original, trim restoration and brick repointing.

Evaluation

The proposed rear additions are compatible with the character of this part of the historic district. The essential characteristic of a context of rowhouse rear elevations is the conglomerate massings of individual blocks, wings and rooms. The effect largely derives from the desire for courts, sunlight, and air. Utilitarian and undecorated, the rear of a rowhouse is traditionally where they have been expanded. This project is consistent with this pattern of growth, and is another volume similar in scale and location to its historic precedents. The contemporary material and roof shape is insignificant compared to the primary concern of massing and size.

The front alterations are also compatible and consistent. The *Basement Entrances and Windows* guideline recommend that character defining features not be altered to accommodate new basement entries (2.1 and 2.2). However, HPO has also taken into consideration the very poor condition of the cast iron stoop and considers the minor alteration of raising the stair by one tread to be a worthwhile trade-off if it results in the substantial reuse and restoration the stairs, and not their removal. As for the dimensions of the run of basement steps (1.4), their projection past the cast iron steps is neither substantial, nor inconsistent with similar alterations that took place on a majority of rowhouses on this block before the historic district was designated.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board:

- *Approve the proposed design for rear additions and front alterations*
- *Delegate final permit approval to staff.*